

**ROBERT J. WITTMAN**  
1ST DISTRICT, VIRGINIA



**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

March 1, 2018

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The Honorable Richard Spencer  
Secretary of the Navy  
2000 Navy Pentagon  
Washington, DC 20350

Dear Secretary Spencer,

After reviewing the 2017 Strategic Laydown of Naval Forces, I noted a continued movement of forces in recent years to the Pacific Fleet. While this has been ostensibly to support the previous administration's "Pivot to the Pacific", I question whether this force structure redistribution should also drive where the Navy homeports its ships. In March 2017, the Acting Assistant Secretary of State remarked in regards to the Pivot, "I think you can probably expect that this administration will have its own formulation." In my estimation, our partners and allies are concerned about presence in theater but are agnostic as to the homeport locations of our fleet. As you prepare the 2018 Strategic Laydown of Naval Forces, I believe that both theater presence and support for our operational plans should be the two main goals and the Strategic Laydown should detail a homeport optimization to obtain such goals.

Over the past 10 years, our naval forces strategy predominantly supports a 1.0 carrier presence for U.S. Central Command, a strategy driven by necessity. Meanwhile, forward deployed naval forces in Japan generally support a 1.0 carrier presence strategy for U.S. Pacific Command. While China's aggressive behavior in the South China Sea has been disturbing, the Central Command AOR remains highly contested – as evidenced by the 2017 emergency tomahawk strike in Syria from forward deployed U.S. Navy destroyers in the Mediterranean Sea. Further, I believe that the belligerence of Russia and continued harassment of our naval forces in the European Command AOR deserve a higher degree of support. In spite of these strategic imperatives, the U.S. Navy has adopted a 60/40 homeport split of forces between the Pacific and the Atlantic oceans that reduces the overall presence, sub-optimizes the support of our combatant commanders, and increases overall costs.

Having an increased presence on the east coast of the United States would greatly benefit the Navy from a cost and time perspective. I understand that transits from the west coast to the Central Command AOR require 11,300 nautical miles while transits from the east coast require only 8,300 nautical miles – an almost 25 percent difference. Considering the purported operating cost of a carrier strike group at about \$6.5 million per day, an additional 10 transit days would equate to \$65 million per transit, or over \$250 million per year. Furthermore, the cost of living between the east coast and the west coast are substantial. The Basic Allowance of Housing on the west coast is over 30 percent more than that on the east coast – a significant savings to Sailors and their families.

In preparing the 2018 Strategic Laydown of Naval Forces, I would ask that strategic homeporting would maintain the ultimate goals of presence and operational requirements. Therefore, I would specifically ask that you provide this committee the costs associated with the following:

- A detailed cost assessment of a carrier strike group transit from the east coast and the west Coast to the Central Command AOR, to include operational and extended maintenance costs.
- An assessment of the east coast and the west coast maintenance capacities and quality of life costs by major Navy homeport.
- An east coast assessment to determine capacity of facilities and the industrial base to support additional Navy forces.

I thank you for your continued service and look forward to working with you in the future.

Sincerely,



Robert J. Wittman  
Member of Congress